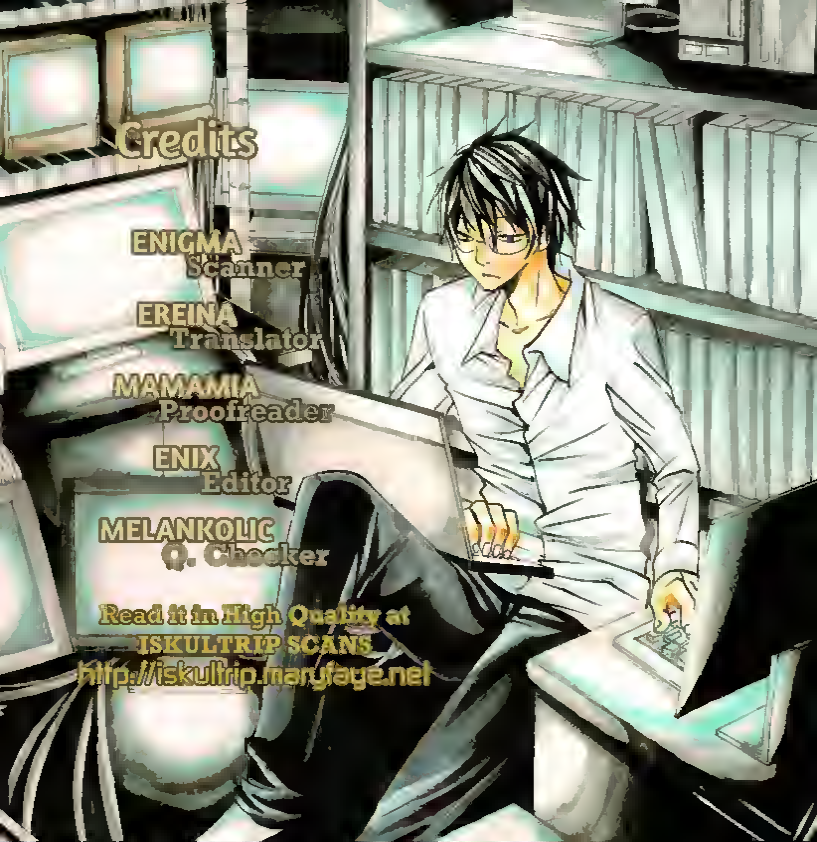
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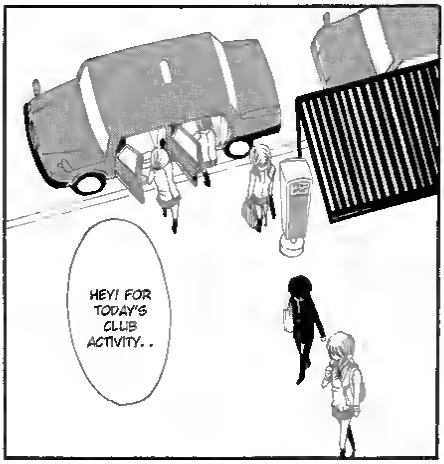
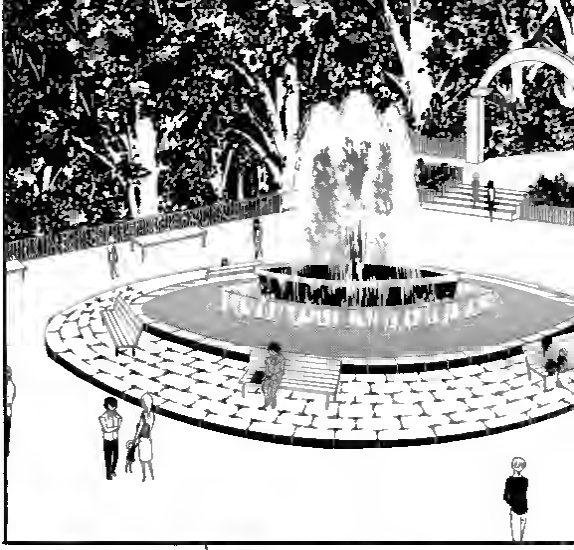
FILE 6. Taxi Service of Happiness


HEY! FOR TODAY'S CLUB ACTIVITY. .

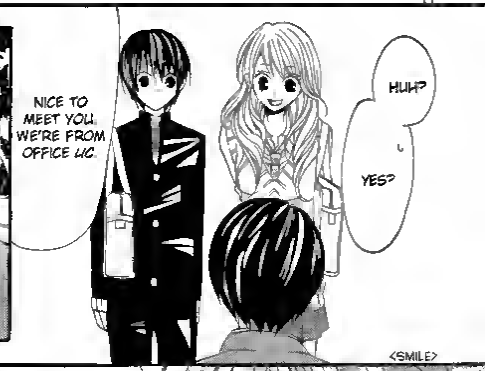
AH, I CALL SHOT-GUN.
IS THAT OKAY?

mumble...
YEAH, SURE, OKAY... FOR A MODEL LIKE HANA, IT'S NATURAL FOR YOU TO USE A TAXI TO GET AROUND...
HMMM
HOW EXTRA-VAGANT, TAKING A TAXI WITH JUST THE GIRLS
THAT'S PRETTY POPULAR LATELY. WITH THAT MANY PEOPLE, IT'S CHEAPER TO SHARE A TAXI IF YOU'RE JUST GOING TO ONE PLACE.
BESIDES, ISN'T IT NICE NOT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR SURROUN-DINGS?
jolt
DID YOU SAY SOME-THING?
UH, NO... NOTHING AT ALL

ARE YOU FROM K-TAXI?



HUH...? BUT AREN'T YOU TWO STUDENTS?
YES.


NICE TO MEET YOU. WE'RE FROM OFFICE UC.
HUH?
YES?
<SMILE>

I SEE..
smile
smile
smile
smile
smile
smile

young talents like us are very necessary for spreading urban legends.

SO, UEMURA-KUN, TOO, HUH...
YOU ALSO MET SOMEONE GOING BY "RUMOR SHOP"...
IN ANY CASE, WE NEED TO REPORT THIS TO THE PRESIDENT QUICKLY.
...
YEAH, WHAT'S MORE, SHE... LOOKED JUST LIKE KUSAKA.
WITH US... WITH LC.
HANA, WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOU CAN'T!

...PLEASE. TRUST ME.
HUH?
PLEASE DON'T TELL ANYONE YET. IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THAT CHILD, THEN GO AHEAD, BUT DON'T TELL ANY-ONE.
BUT...
...ALRIGHT.

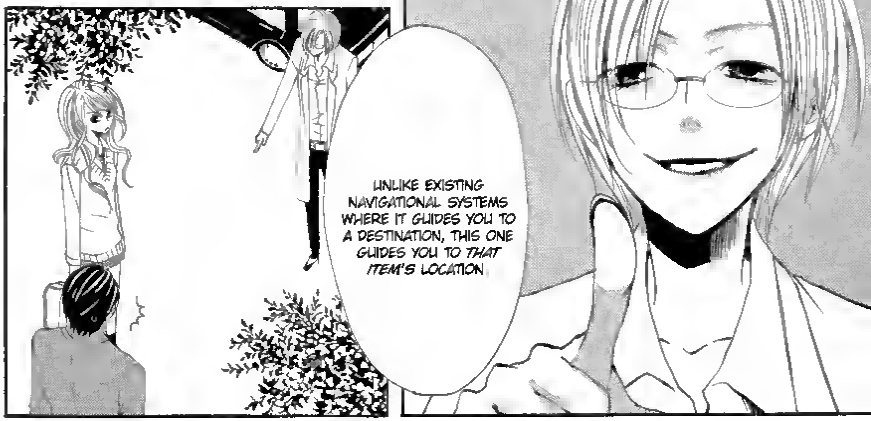
WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR TRUST IN US?
Ah!
AH... OKAY.
smile smile smile smile
THEN, PLEASE TELL US YOUR REQUEST.
OH, YES, THAT'S RIGHT. WELL, AS YOU ALREADY KNOW, WE'RE A TAXI COMPANY. WITH THE COMPANY ON THE LINE, WE'RE AIMING TO BOOST UP OUR IMAGE.
BOOST UP YOUR IMAGE?
WASN'T THERE A HOT TOPIC ONE TIME IN KYOTO ABOUT "A TAXI RIDE THAT WOULD BRING HAPPINESS"?
EVEN A SIMPLE RUMOR LIKE THAT WOULD BE A BIG PLUS FOR OUR COMPANY IF IT BECOMES WIDESPREAD
WE WOULD ABSOLUTELY LIKE .
TO PROMOTE THE BUSINESS VIA RUMOR MANIPULATION

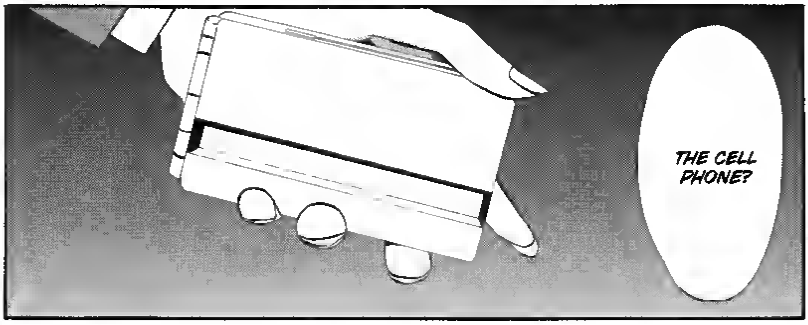
REPUTATION VIA WORD OF MOUTH IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS. SO PLEASE ASSIST US.
...WE ACCEPT
HOWEVER
HOWEVER...?
LIKE THEY SAY, THERE'S NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE
WE WILL NEED SOME HINTS TO USE AS MATERIALS FOR REFERENCES, SUCH AS K-TAXI'S TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION.
YOU WANT TO KNOW OUR COMPANY'S SECRET? I HAVE SWORN TO KEEP IT CONFIDENTIAL
IF YOU KEEP ANY SECRETS FROM US, THEN I'M AFRAID THIS RUMOR WILL TURN VICIOUS UNLESS YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT?
menacing
I...
I UNDERSTAND... IN THAT CASE
BEEP

VROOOM?
UH YES CAN YOU COME RIGHT NOW?
...?
!
screech
STEP
Oooh!
AS EXPECTED, THAT WAS QUICK
A TAXI?

"THANKS FOR WAITING"? BUT DIDN'T WE CALL JUST NOW? HOW DID YOU GET HERE SO FAST WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING WHERE WE'RE LOCATED?
THIS IS OUR ADMIN-CONSULTANT, MIURA SATOMI.
THANKS FOR WAIT-ING.
I THOUGHT WE'VE AGREED THAT YOU'D COME ALONE FOR THE REQUEST NEGOTIATION.
OF COURSE. AND I DIDN'T BREAK MY PROMISE.
HOWEVER, THAT CAR OVER THERE RECOG-NIZES ME.

ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN
WE CALL THIS TAXI "SHOGGOTH"*.
IT'S AN EXPERIMENTAL CAR SCHEDULED TO BECOME A PART OF K COMPANY'S NEW SERVICE.
*SHOGGOTH is a fictional monster.
AN EXPERIMENTAL CAR. SO IT'S DIFFERENT FROM REGULAR TAXIS?
YES ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH GPS?
YEAH... LIKE THOSE IN CELL PHONES, RIGHT? THEY GET TO TRACE YOUR LOCATION VIA SATELLITES
CAR NAVIGATION SYSTEMS UTILIZING GPS IS ESPECIALLY DEVELOPED HERE IN JAPAN.
AND INSTALLED ON THIS SHOGGOTH IS THE MOST ADVANCED NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM.
...WHAT ARE ITS SPECIFIC CAPABILITIES?


UNLIKE EXISTING NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEMS WHERE IT GUIDES YOU TO A DESTINATION, THIS ONE GUIDES YOU TO THAT ITEM'S LOCATION


THE CELL PHONE?

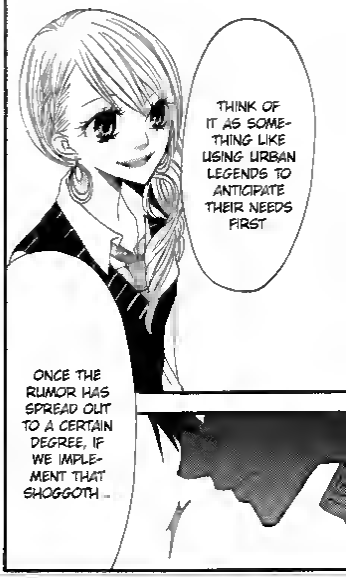
ONCE THE CELLPHONE ADDRESS HAS BEEN ENTERED INTO SHOGGOTH, IT CAN GUIDE YOU TO THE CELLPHONE HOLDER'S LOCATION
Target location
100 m

NERVOUS
S-SO... WHAT DO YOU THINK?
AND SO, JUST LIKE HOW THIS TAXI CAME HERE QUICKLY EARLIER, EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE LOCATION OF THE PERSON YOU'RE MEETING, AS LONG AS YOU HAVE THEIR CELL PHONE ADDRESS...
YOU CAN REACH THEIR LOCATION.
GRIN
it's perfect.

...SO THAT'S WHY,
INSTEAD OF PIMPING OUT SUB-PAR RUMORS, I'D LIKE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT SERVICE'S FEATURES
NO WAY!
BUT HANA, ARE YOU INTENDING TO LEAK OUT THEIR SECRET?
BE QUIET, NAO!
TALKING ABOUT MACHINES AGAIN... SO BORING! I'M OUT!
where is this taxi taking me?
Without even asking for my destination...
HOW ABOUT, "EVEN WITHOUT GIVING A DESTINATION, THAT TAXI WILL BRING YOU JOY BY TAKING YOU TO THAT IMPORTANT SOMEONE "
JUST EXCHANGE THE TRUTH WITH A RUMOR

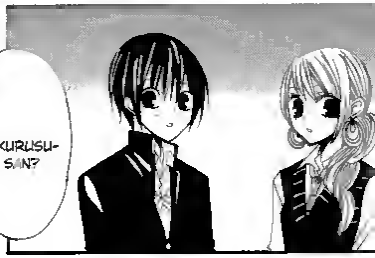
AH!
WELL, IT'S THE TIME WHERE HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS RIDE TAXIS SHOULDN'T WE FOCUS ON THE YOUNG GENE-RATION?
THAT'S RATHER MAIDEN-LY...
LIKE THAT!
IT FEELS KINDA LIKE A DATING SERVICE...
MMM... SIMILAR URBAN LEGENDS ALSO EXIST IT SHOULD BE EASY TO SPREAD IT ONLINE OR BY WORD OF MOUTH
THAT'S THE KIND OF RAWNESS GIRLS GO FOR
AH IN THAT CASE, PERHAPS THE GIRLS WOULD BE HAPPY

DID YOU JUST SAY "SHOG-GOTH"?!


THINK OF IT AS SOME-THING LIKE USING URBAN LEGENDS TO ANTICIPATE THEIR NEEDS FIRST
ONCE THE RUMOR HAS SPREAD OUT TO A CERTAIN DEGREE, IF WE IMPLE-MENT THAT SHOGGOTH...

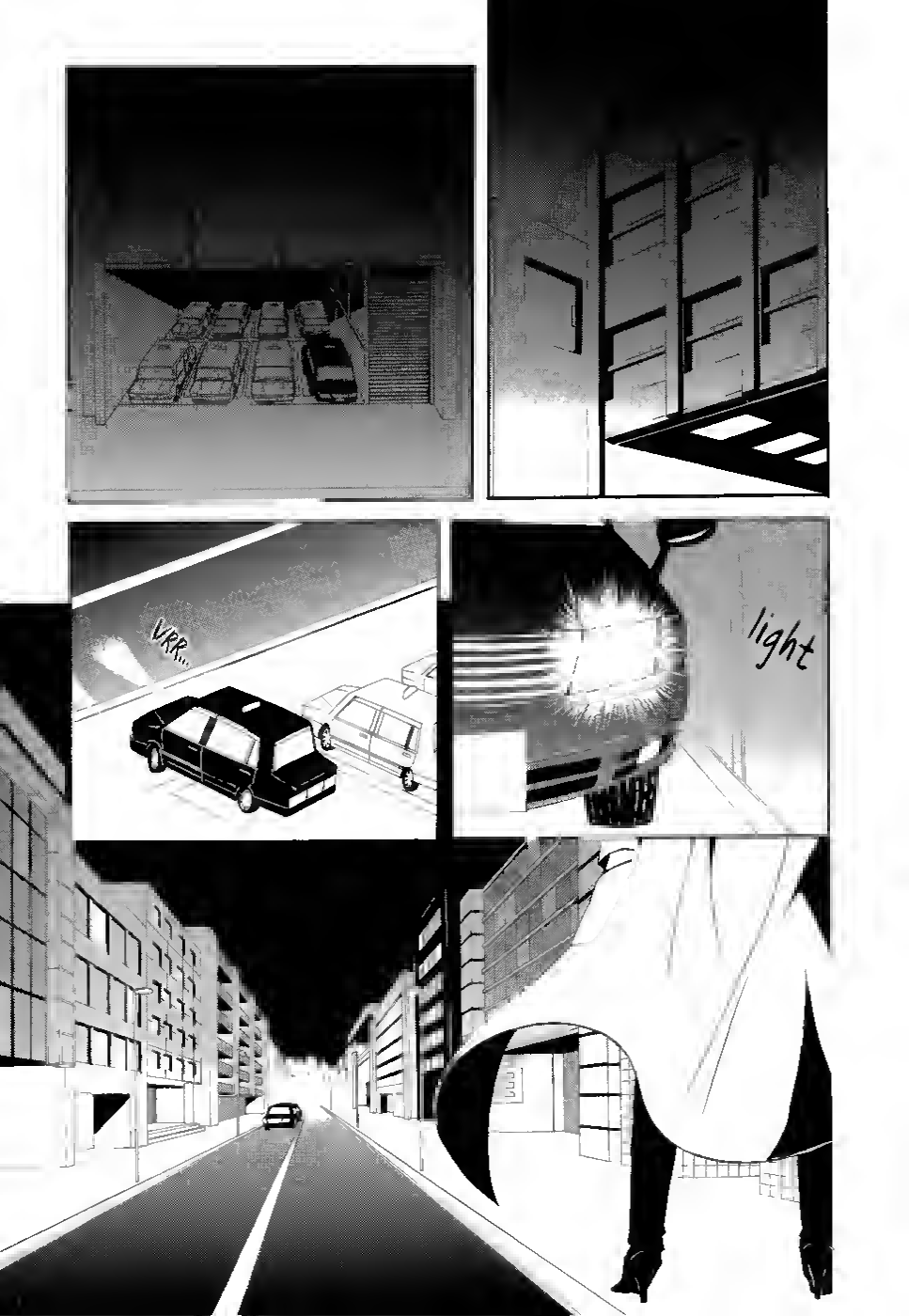
AH... NO... IT'S NOTHING.
...?

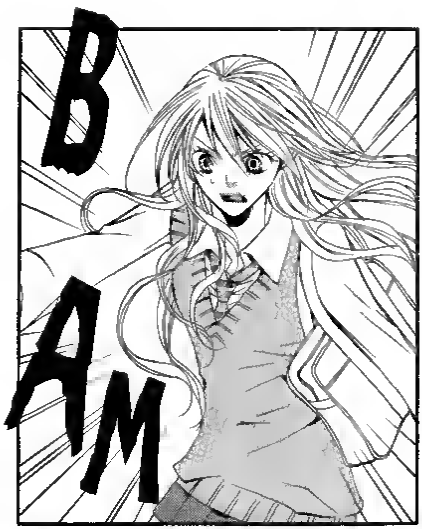
...KURUSU-SAN?



WELL THEN, PRESIDENT, SINCE THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT REGARDING THIS CASE, WILL YOU ENTRUST IT TO US?

YEAH. AS USUAL, I'LL LEAVE IT TO YOU.


VRR...
light



A CURSE FROM A DRIVER KILLED IN AN ACCIDENT?

[Multiple Continuous hit-and-run accidents caused by a driver-less taxi]

WHO KNOWS? I'M NOT PICKING UP ANY VIBES FROM THIS. NOT EVERYTHING INVOLVES CURSES, YOU KNOW.
IS THIS... LIKE... THE USUAL CURSES?
IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE RUMOR WE SPREAD.
ACTUALLY, THE STRANGE HIT-AND-RUNS HAVE ALREADY OCCURED REPEATEDLY, ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT PUBLICLY LINKED WITH THE RUMOR.
THIS RUMOR IS SPREADING EVEN AMONGST GIRLS... THAT IT WAS ALSO K COMPANY'S TAXI.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
SPEAKING OF WHICH... THIS URBAN LEGEND ALMOST SEEMS LIKE IT'S OUT TO COUNTERACT OUR RUMORS.
HANA, THAT MEANS...!

I am Rumor Shop.
"COUNTER LEGEND."

COULD IT BE ...?!
!
SORRY!
I'M SURE IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE, BUT I'M CONCERNED REGARDING THE SOURCE OF THIS RUMOR. PLUS, THIS WILL AFFECT OUR CREDIBILITY.
HEMURA-KUN LET'S HEAD TO K COMPANY.
UH... OKAY.
HOLD ON
I'M COMING WITH YOU.

CLOSE
TH-THIS IS TROUBLING FOR YOU TO COME SO SUDDENLY—
looks around
I'M SURE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE OF THE UNPLANNED RUMOR BEING SPREAD AROUND? WHY DIDN'T YOU COME TO US IMMEDIATELY?

WHERE'S SHOGGOTH?
...HEY, YOU
TH THAT'S BECAUSE
...!!!
I THOUGHT I WAS JUST BEING PARA-NOID, BUT I WAS RIGHT AFTER ALL.
THE TRUTH BEHIND THAT RUMOR... IT'S SHOGGOTH, RIGHT?
W-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
BUT AN EXTREMELY HIGH TECH CONTROLLER A.I. AM I WRONG?
I'M AFRAID THAT TAXI WASN'T JUST MERELY EQUIPPED WITH A CAR NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM...
ISN'T SHOGGOTH THAT TAXI?

WHAT'S GOING ON?
AT THE VERY LEAST, I'M FAMILIAR WITH THE A.I. CALLED SHOGGOTH
Y-YOU ALREADY KNOW EVERY-THING
...IT'S EXACTLY AS HE SAID.
THE REAL IDENTITY OF SHOGGOTH
IS A TAXI EQUIPPED WITH SENSORS AND A.I., CAPABLE OF TRANS-PORTING PASSEN-GERS WITHOUT A DRIVER
BEEP
BEEP

...I'M NOT REALLY SURE A FEW DAYS AGO, IT DISAPPEARED FROM THE GARAGE. RIGHT AFTERWARDS, THE HIT-AND-RUN INCIDENTS STARTED HAPPENING
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN WITH THAT SHOG-GOTH?
MOVE WITH-OUT A DRIVER ...?!
IN OTHER WORDS, A ROBOT TAXI.
IF YOU KNEW THAT MUCH, THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP IT?!
NOT A CURSE, BUT A CAR'S OWN INTELLI-GENCE..
IT'S HITTING PEOPLE BY ITS OWN WILL?
CUSTOMER DATA... I SEE, YOU'RE AFRAID THE SCANDAL WOULD GET EXPOSED...
...OF ALL THINGS, SHOGGOTH RECORDED OUR COMPANY'S TOP SECRET DATABASE AND SELECTS ITS TARGETS FROM THE CUSTOMER DATA...

IT WAS THAT WOMAN! THE ONE WHO BROUGHT SHOGGOTH TO US WAS ALSO MIURA SATOMI!
AH—
WHO EXACTLY HANDED OVER SHOGGOTH TO YOU?
IT CAN'T BE THAT SIMPLE TO GET HOLD OF YOUR CUSTOMER DATA, EITHER.
Was it Satomi..?!
UP UNTIL SHE SWINDLED THE CELLPHONE DATA, SHE WAS STILL GIVING OUT ORDERS,
AND THEN SHE DISAP-PEARED—
Miura Satomi?
IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF HER!!!

WELL, WHAT SHOULD WE DO? IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN COUNT ON THE CLIENT.
FOR NOW, WE WAIT FOR IT TO RUN OUT OF GAS AND LEAVE IT TO THE COPS
NO... FROM ITS SPECS, WE CAN'T BE CERTAIN IT RUNS ON GAS. IF SHOGGOTH IS NOT STOPPED, THEN VICTIMS WILL ONLY INCREASE.
...KURUSU-SAN, YOU SEEM TO BE REALLY WORKED UP ON THIS CASE. IS THERE A DEEPER REASON?
SHOGGOTH WAS CREATED BY ME.
WHAT?!

AS LONG AS OUR OPPONENT IS A CAR, IT'LL HAVE TO FOLLOW ROUTES SET BY THE CAR NAVIGATION SYSTEM. I'LL HACK INTO ITS ROAD MAP DATA AND GUIDE IT SOMEHOW.
EVEN IF YOU SAY THAT, YOU GOT ANY PLANS?
I CAN'T REALLY TELL THE DETAILS RIGHT NOW.
THE SHOGGOTH AS WE SPEAK IS BEING INTENTIONALLY FORCED TO GO ON A RAMPAGE. THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SAFELY BRING IT TO A STOP... IS PROBABLY ME.
PLEASE.
BUT THAT ALONE WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE.
HANA... UEMURA.
YET ANOTHER PLAN THAT'S BORDERLINE CRIME...
NO IT IS A CRIME.
LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH.
IN ORDER FOR SHOGGOTH... TO BE RELEASED FROM THE CHAINS OF THIS MALICIOUS RUMOR.

TO SET IT IN MOTION... THAT WAS... THE GEAR...
...BOOK-CARTS OF THE ANCIENTS...
ITS DESTINATION DOWN THE BARREN PATH...
Pat...
THAT'S RIGHT...
EVERTHING ARE GEARS, NAO.

VRR...
BEEEEEP
BEEP
BEEP

<LIGHT?
<VRRRRM?
...?

ゴ
!
ooooooz!!

ぐちゃ
ぐちゃ

<STALL>

GREAT JOB!

WHAT HAP-PENED?

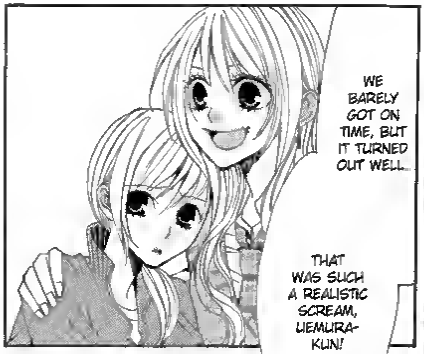
WHA...

SIIP
IT WAS SUCCESSFUL.
PHEW

A few hours ago -
THE ONLY WAY TO STOP SHOGGOTH IS TO TERMINATE THE PROGRAM.
I'LL ROUTE IT VIA CAR NAVIGATION AND SEND A VIRUS DIRECTLY USING THE "LIGHT BEACONS".
...PLUS?
IF IT'S FAR AWAY, THEN I'M AFRAID THE OTHER CARS MIGHT GET WRAPPED UP IN THIS, PLUS...
IS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DO IT WHILE BEING FAR AWAY?

...AND THE ONE TO LURE IT IN...
WILL BE WHO?
SHOGGOTH TARGETS ITS VICTIMS IN THE ORDER OF THEIR REGISTRATION TO THE TOP SECRET DATABASE.
SHOGGOTH WILL SEARCH FOR THAT PERSON'S CELLPHONE. THEN PROBABLY RECOGNIZE THAT PERSON'S APPEARANCE VIA SENSORS
open
THE LIGHT BEACON'S TRANSMISSION RANGE IS A FEW METERS AT MOST. WE'LL NEED TO LURE SHOGGOTH INTO ITS RANGE AND KEEP IT IN PLACE!
p Secret
WHICH MEANS...
AHA!
HE SAID APPEARANCE! UEMURA-KUN!
YUP. I CAN SEE IT NOW... THE PLAN...

TH... THERE SHE IS!!!
YOU! IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE THEN HAND OVER YOUR CELLPHONE!
HUH?
A-AND ALSO... THAT BOW AND... TH-THAT UNIFORM... TAKE IT OFF.
...
A PERVERT?


WE BARELY GOT ON TIME, BUT IT TURNED OUT WELL...

THAT WAS SUCH A REALISTIC SCREAM, UEMURA-KUN!
UHM... NO... THAT WAS A REAL SCREAM...

SHOGGOTH ...

HMPH YOUR COSPLAY EVEN FOOLED THE A.I.
THAT'S NOT EXACTLY SOMETHING I'M HAPPY ABOUT

DRRM...
DRRRRRR...

DRRRRR...

THE TOOL ITSELF HAD NO EVIL INTENTIONS. THE FAULT LIES ON THE PERSON WHO USED IT FOR MALICIOUS THINGS.

SHOGGOTH HERE WAS MERELY A HEARTLESS FAILURE THAT GOT EXPLOITED.

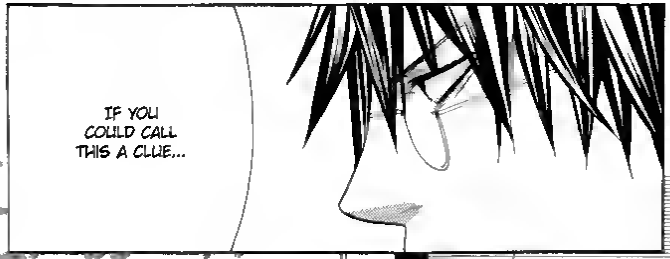
...SOMEHOW, I FEEL SAD FOR IT.
IF ONLY IT DIDN'T THINK TO HIT PEOPLE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A TAXI THAT BRINGS HAPPINESS TO OTHERS.

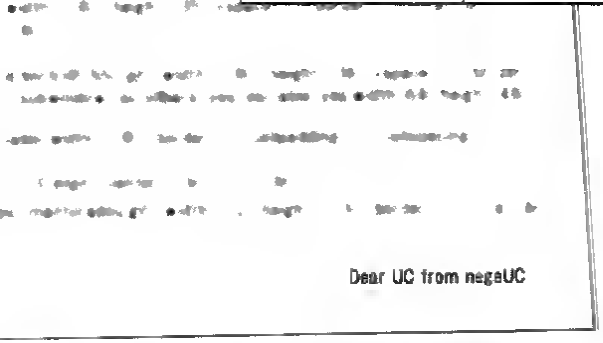
THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S JUST A TOOL.
Counter Legend. Shoggoth.
And cases that appeared to have taken our abilities into account...
Are we being tested?

Which means... that person, too...
...

UNLIKE BEFORE IT LOOKS LIKE KURUSU-SAN HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH FRIENDS
RIGHT?
Heh heh
AS EXPECTED

HEY, YOU! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE ALL DAY? ALTHOUGH YOU'RE USUALLY LIKE THIS.





— Dear UC from NegaUC —